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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 001620

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: BAHRAINI GTMO DETAINEE SUICIDE REPORT GETS
PROMINENT COVERAGE

REF: A. MANAMA 1594 B. MANAMA 1553 C. MANAMA 1547

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe. Reasons: 1.4 (B)(D)

1. (U) This is an action message -- see para 5.

2. (U) All Bahraini newspapers gave prominent front-page coverage November 2 to the November 1 Washington Post story describing the reported October 15 suicide attempt by Bahraini Guantanamo detainee Juma Al-Dossary. The reporting in the Bahraini press drew heavily from the Washington Post article, with additional quotes from a second American lawyer as well as a Bahraini human rights activist. In one article, MFA Undersecretary Shaikh Abdel Aziz Al Khalifa was quoted as assuring the families that the Bahrain government was looking into all allegations of mistreatment of Bahraini detainees, adding: "We are very disturbed by these allegations and feel very strongly that any mistreatment of our Bahraini detainees will not be accepted in any way, and we will do our best to ensure that they are treated fairly."

3. (C) In an November 2 discussion with the Ambassador, Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid said that the continuing reports about Al-Dossary's alleged mistreatment at Guantanamo (ref B) and now the account of his reported suicide have created a real stir in Bahrain. He said he expected more questioning from Parliamentarians. He reiterated the Ministry's request for information about the veracity of Al-Dossary's allegations (reported ref B) as well as this latest report of a suicide attempt.

4. (C) Comment: The planned return of three of the six Bahraini detainees over the Eid holiday weekend would normally be expected to alleviate some of the pressure and concern that has built up locally about the Bahrainis at Guantanamo. However, coming in the context of a steady stream of reports of alleged mistreatment, hunger strikes, and suicide attempts involving the Bahrainis, reporting is not likely to abate following their return -- especially when it is discovered that the two who have received the most press -- hunger striker Al-Murbati and Al-Dossari -- are not in this group of three returnees. And we can expect strong press interest in how the three returnees will describe their treatment at Guantanamo.

5. (C) Action request: USG interests will continue to take a hit in Bahrain on the detainee issue. The Embassy urges urgent consideration of steps that could be taken to improve our public standing on this issue here, such as:

-- language to respond privately to the MFA's diplomatic note of October 23 requesting information on the veracity of reports of mistreatment of Al-Dossary and of Al-Murbati's hunger strike (ref B).

-- press guidance or talking points that could be used to respond publicly to the allegations of mistreatment of Al Dossary (ref B).

-- consideration of approval of a trip by representatives of the Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society to Washington to discuss the issue of the remaining Bahraini detainees, as requested by the group in a meeting with the Ambassador on October 16 (ref C), or possibly a DVC with DOD officials as a first step.

MONROE